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Ecumenical Patriarch Stresses Urgency of Unity

(Istanbul) - Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodoxy, has warned that unless the three principal Christian bodies - Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox - come together in "qualified unity" soon, all are "in danger of missing the bus of their Christian mission".

"We have a great Christian mission to fulfill," he told a press conference in Istanbul, "and we must either do it in unity or risk failure."

Indicating that he was not speaking of the theological unity of the three churches, Patriarch Athenagoras said the unity he had in mind would have two aims - "one negative and the other positive".

"In its negative sense," he said, "it would disarm hatred, distrust and bad propaganda between church groups. In the positive sense, unity would promote contacts on the common principles of Christianity and how they should be propagated."

The Patriarch said that in this conception of unity, he was "sure" he would have the support of the Protestant Church as well as of "the millions of Orthodox Christians belonging to the Russian, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Ethiopian, Cypriot, Coptic and Armenian Churches".

Patriarch Athenagoras said that he believed that meanwhile there were "indications that the Catholic Church was shifting from its position of isolation".

"I have told the Pope that only in paradise can one live alone," he said, adding that "it is my impression that the Pope has abandoned the idea of holding a General Council".

It was understood that by this statement the Patriarch meant that he believes the Ecumenical Council called by Pope John XXIII will be limited to Roman Catholics with non-Catholics admitted only as observers.

The Patriarch also stressed the urgency for achieving unity in a recent encyclical in which he declared, "The partition which the centuries have raised up between the Christian confessions does not make impossible their mutual understanding, rapprochement and reunion". He added that "the good will which church leaders have manifested during these last years is comforting and illuminating".

EPS, Geneva

WSCF Teaching Conference, Strasbourg, July 16 - 31

(Strasbourg) - A major international "teaching conference" on "Christ's Ministry to the World and Our Calling Today" will be held at Strasbourg, France, July 16 - 31, under the auspices of the World's Student Christian Federation.

The conference will bring together an estimated 600 undergraduate and graduate students and 100 prominent church leaders from more than 50 countries for 16 days of study, prayer and discussion.

It will mark the mid-way point of a major six-year WSCF study programme on "The Life and Mission of the Church" being conducted under the auspices of its 70 national member movements. Following the Strasbourg conference, these movements will sponsor a series of regional meetings based on its findings.

The agenda will be highlighted by a series of plenary sessions with addresses by outstanding church leaders, but the major portion of time will be given over to tutorial groups, seminars and private study. A total of 21 special-interest seminar groups, led by teaching teams of two or three experts, will meet six times during the conference. These will deal with the life and mission of the Church in relation to a wide range of subjects including mass communication, education, evangelism, the co-operation of men and women, peace in the atomic age, missions, the unity of the Church, the scientific revolution, and personal problems of youth in a changing society. Each of the groups will produce a report intended to serve as the basis for further study and action by the WSCF and its member movements.

Each evening participants will meet in small groups under the direction of a "tutor", who will serve as pastor and teacher to the members of his group throughout the conference. The tutorial groups themselves will be composed of 15 to 18 students from a wide variety of national and confessional backgrounds. Special periods for private study have also been scheduled each day.

In preparation for the conference, and as part of the six-year study programme, the WSCF has published a series of 15 study outlines on the Life and Mission of the Church, in English, French, German, and Spanish. More than 50,000 copies have been purchased by student groups throughout the world.

The Life and Mission of the Church project began with a WSCF-sponsored meeting of Asian students in December, 1958, at Rangoon, Burma. Following the Strasbourg meeting, the WSCF General Committee will meet in Greece in August to plan 10 to 12 regional conferences to be held in co-operation with its national affiliates between 1961 and 1963.

EPS, Geneva

Philippine Churches Ask Nuclear Ban

(Manila) - A resolution urging the Philippine Government to work for disarmament and the banning of further nuclear tests has been adopted in Manila by a committee of the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches.

Addressed to President Carlos P. Garcia, the resolution said that war is "diametrically opposed to Jesus's teaching of love, friendship and reconciliation".

It pointed out that war is renounced in the Philippine constitution as an instrument of national policy and also that the World Council of Churches, of which the Federation is an affiliate, has also voiced its opposition to war and nuclear tests. The resolution came in the midst of a controversy in government circles over the stationing of nuclear weapons in the Philippines.

EPS, Geneva

Church of Greece Forms Missionary Committee

(Athens) - The Orthodox Church of Greece has set up a committee to organise aid to missionary churches abroad.

Formation of the committee of three - the Metropolitans of Salonica, Demetrias and Sparta - followed a visit to Greece at the end of last year by Archimandrite Reuben Mukasa Sparta of the recently established Orthodox Church in Uganda. (See EPS N° 46, 1959)

During his visit, the archimandrite, who is in charge of Orthodox missionary work in East Africa under the Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, conferred with leaders of Church and State to ask their support of the missionary appeal made early last year by SYNDESMOS, an international Orthodox youth organisation.

As a result, Queen Frederika of Greece offered four scholarships in Greece for Uganda students studying for the priesthood. Another scholarship for a nurse was given by the Greek Red Cross and eight others came from the University of Salonica, the Mayor of Salonica, the governing synod of the Monks on the Holy Mountain of Athos and a private donor.

Gifts to furnish churches and provide vestments have come from Greece and from other Orthodox communities in Western Europe and financial support is reported on the increase to help the expanding work of the estimated 20,000 Orthodox in East Africa.

Father Sparta is also active in the social and political life of Uganda, where he serves as adviser to the Kabaka of Buganda and represents him in the legislative Assembly.

EPS, Geneva

Italian Protestants Prepare for Olympics


(Rome) - Protestant churches in Italy are planning a welcome for visitors to Rome during the Olympic Games this August.

The member churches of the Italian Protestant Federation will publish a folder with a map showing the city's evangelical churches and giving information about Protestant activities in Italy.

An Information and Rest Centre will be set up at a central point in Rome and efforts are being made to acquire space for a chapel at the Olympic Village.

An ecumenical service will be held in one of the Waldensian churches during the games.

EPS, Geneva



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Clergy Warn of Anti-Catholic Debates

(Washington, D.C.) - Thirteen leading US Protestant ministers have issued a strong warning against "the serious danger that the forces of hate and uninformed hostility may be loosed upon our people" if anti-Catholicism becomes a factor in the US presidential campaign.

In an open letter to "fellow pastors in Christ" the clergymen urged them "to use every opportunity at your command to commend to your flock that charitable moderation and reasoned judgment which alone can safeguard the peaceful community of this nation". Senator John F. Kennedy (Dem., Mass.), a Roman Catholic, is a leading contender for the Democratic nomination for the presidency.

The letter was written by Dean Francis B. Sayre, Jr., of Washington Cathedral (Protestant Episcopal). Signatories of the letter included Dr. Edwin T. Dahlberg, president of the National Council of Churches; Presiding Bishop Arthur Lichtenberger of the Protestant Episcopal Church; Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA; Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam of Washington; and Dr. James E. Wagner, president of the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

EPS, Geneva

US Lutherans Urge End of Death Penalty

(Atlantic City) - Abolition of capital punishment has been urged by the Board of Social Mission of the United Lutheran Church in America, at a meeting in Atlantic City, N.J.

A Board statement deplored capital punishment as "not an equitable instrument of justice because it (1) tends to fall disproportionately upon those least able to defend themselves, and (2) it makes a miscarriage of justice irrevocable".

Statistical studies, it said, "do not bear out the assumption that capital punishment is an effective deterrent to crime. Not the severity of punishment, but its certainty and swiftness is the greater deterrent to criminal acts".

In another statement the Board called upon all governments which have nuclear weapons to "persist in the efforts to arrive at effective multilateral agreements on the cessation of all kinds of nuclear weapons testing".

Both statements will be recommended for adoption to the 22nd biennial convention of the Church in October.

EPS, Geneva

Buddhism to be Made Burma's State Religion

(Rangoon) - Prime Minister U Nu of the Union of Burma has appointed an Advisory Commission for making Buddhism the state religion.

He has named as its director U Thein Maung, a former chief justice of the predominantly Buddhist land. The commission will make a tour of Burma to visit more than 40 towns to interview leaders of Christian, Hindu and Islamic communities before making a report to the government.

Purpose of the interviews with non-Buddhist religious leaders will be to "enable them to express freely their fears, if any, regarding establishment of a state religion and to suggest how their rights should be safeguarded".

Appointment of the Commission fulfills a campaign promise made by the Prime Minister before his recent election. Buddhism has had a strong revival in Burma recently. Some observers have seen the government's support of its resurgence as a move to thwart Communism, to strengthen the regime and unify national consciousness and culture.

EPS, Geneva

Anglicans - Presbyterians May Reopen Unity Talks

(Edinburgh) - The reopening of conversations between the Anglican and Presbyterian churches in England and Scotland is suggested in the 1960 report of the Church of Scotland's Inter-Church Relations Committee published last week.

The report states that the time has now come to appoint the committee of fifty ministers and elders, envisaged at the Church's 1959 Assembly in June, to prepare for resumed conversations. The report will be presented to this year's Assembly to be convened in Edinburgh later this month.

It was at last year's Assembly that the Church of Scotland rejected by a vote of 300 to 266 proposals for "bishops in presbytery", as not acceptable because they "imply a denial of the catholicity of the Church of Scotland and of the validity and regularity of its ministry within the Church Catholic". (See EPS N° 22, 1959)

Following this rejection, the report discloses a correspondence was initiated between the Archbishop of Canterbury and Dr. William Tindal, the new convenor of the Church of Scotland's Inter-Church Relations Committee.

The report says that the letters on each side recorded "an earnest desire" that conversations be resumed. However, in one of the letters mentioned in the report, the Archbishop of Canterbury is quoted as saying he is "satisfied that the time has not yet come when we could profitably resume conversations".

Before that could happen he wrote on October 5, 1959, there would be "need for special consideration within the Church of England of the important matters" raised by the Church of Scotland General Assembly. He said these matters would include the meaning of unity as distinct from uniformity in church order, the meaning of validity as applied to church order and to ministerial orders and the question of the catholicity of the Church of Scotland. All these questions have been referred to the Church of England's Committee on Approaches to Unity.

EPS, Geneva

Episcopalians Endorse Anti-Segregation Statement

(Greenwich, Conn.) - The National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church (US) has given its unanimous endorsement to a church advisory statement on racial matters expressing sympathy for anti-segregation demonstrations and approving "civil disobedience in certain moral areas".

In taking the action the Council declined a request by Bishop Charles C.J. Carpenter of Alabama that it repudiate the document which, he said, "if carried to its ultimate conclusions, would condone lawlessness".

Endorsing it, the Council supported its "appropriateness" and recommended it for "serious consideration and study" by local congregations. The statement says, "Certain laws so degrade the individual that they threaten the dignity of the law itself. Civil disobedience can be a means of affirming the dignity of the law." It was prepared by the Council's Division of Racial Minorities and Christian Citizenship.

EPS, Geneva

Formosan Evangelists to Visit Philippines

(Formosa) - A three-member team of Formosan evangelists will conduct a four weeks campaign among the Amoy-speaking Chinese in the Philippines.

Arrangements for the visit from May 20 through June 20 have been made by the Presbyterian Church of Formosa in response to an invitation from the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches. The visit is being arranged under the general auspices of the East Asian Christian Conference.

EPS, Geneva

World YMCA To Hold Conference

(Amsterdam) - More than six hundred teen-age boys, ages 15 through 18, from upwards of 50 countries will gather at Hilversum, Netherlands, August 3 - 13, for a YMCA World Youth Conference.

During the eleven-day conference they will hear addresses by prominent church and government leaders and will meet in daily Bible study sessions and discussion groups to talk over such questions as the role of youth in the family, the church, the school and at work and issues of war and peace, authority in a changing world and similar topics.

In preparation for the Conference youth are studying these issues in a 53-page booklet which has been distributed in thousands of copies in the 73 countries in which the "Y" has work. In all about one and a half million youth are estimated to be studying the booklet.

Conference speakers will include Dr. Ralph Bunche, Under-Secretary of the United Nations who will speak on "Prospects of Peace"; Prof. George Crespy, of the University of Montpellier who will speak on "Authority and Freedom"; and Dr. Charles Sherman, the Minister of Finance in Liberia; M. Pierre François, director of the Youth Division of UNESCO and Dr. Horst Fild, general secretary of the German YMCA.

Other conference activities will include an ecumenical worship service, sports meetings and sight-seeing tours. During the afternoons there will also be groups in photography, painting, dramatics and other subjects.

The Conference will be inter-confessional, as well as international, and delegates will include 20 Greek Orthodox youth and about 75 Roman Catholic youth. About 120 girls will also attend from countries in which the YMCA has woman members.

The Conference is the first of its kind since 1955 when the "Y" sponsored a world meeting in Paris, France. EPS, Geneva

Presbyterians Reject Resolution to Oppose Catholic Candidate

(Jacksonville, Fla.) - The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the US (Southern) has rejected as "bigotry" a resolution to have the denomination put on record as officially opposed to the election of a Roman Catholic president.

In what is believed to be the first action of this kind taken by a major church body in the current US political campaign, the Assembly declared that it "does not deem it appropriate to its functions to endorse or condemn any individual candidate for public office".

At the same time the Assembly reaffirmed "the historic American position with respect to the separation of Church and State". The resolution did not mention by name Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, a contender for the Democratic nomination and a Roman Catholic.

In another action the denomination's 100th General Assembly meeting in Jacksonville, Fla., approved a report of a Committee on Inter-Church Relations which had rejected a proposal that the denomination study the legality of its membership in the National Council of Churches. It reaffirmed its support of the NCC and its "warm ties" with sister churches in the Reformed faith and in the World Council of Churches.

The Assembly further:

Turned down a proposal for a plan of union with the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, but called for increased co-operation with that body.

Endorsed a statement strongly deploring continued preparation for nuclear warfare.

Rejected after vigorous debate a proposal that on moral grounds the denomination dispose of its financial holdings in the tobacco industry. Delegates indicated they thought the vote was strictly a financial decision and not a comment on the spiritual issues involved in the use of tobacco. A spokesman said that "compared to the total amount of stock held in various fields, the tobacco holdings are negligible".

Called upon synods and presbyteries to integrate their white educational institutions "with decisiveness and dispatch" and reaffirmed a 1954 stand that enforced racial segregation is "against the will of God".

Affirmed the right and duty of its members to carry out responsible family planning.

Some 500 clergy and lay delegates attended the Assembly which marked the centennial of the formation of the church. EPS, Geneva

Methodist Bishops Denounce Attacks Against NCC and WCC

(Denver, Colorado) - "A vigorous protest against viciously false statements" made against prominent Protestant churchmen and the US National and the World Councils of Churches has been registered by the Methodist Church's Council of Bishops.

In a 20,000-word Episcopal address to the Church's quadrennial General Conference in Denver, the bishops deplored the assaults on these co-operative bodies "at a time when there was never greater need to emphasize the unity of the Christian Church".

To combat these slanders, the address said, there is need for a more thorough educational programme in the churches "about the origin, nature and purposes" of co-operative church agencies. Further, it urged that both clergy and laity get more actual experience in ecumenical activity, locally, nationally and in world programmes.

The message also defended the right of the church and its agencies to speak on controversial issues in the fields of social, economic or political policy and action. "Even at the risk of being mistaken in some of its judgments the Church will not cease to seek for the mind of Christ as this can be related to current problems and to declare its convictions on matters of human concern in the light of the Gospel", the bishops said.

But they cautioned "no committee or conference meeting under the auspices of any council of churches should attempt to speak either to or for the churches in a fashion that exceeds the limits of its representative capacity or its original organisation". They added that "at all levels of council operation there is need for fuller lay participation".

In other sections of the address, the bishops spoke out against racial segregation in the Church, endorsed birth control, reiterated their opposition to liquor and tobacco and noted there are "disturbing signs" that the current revival of religion in the United States may have passed its crest.

The Episcopal address, which was signed by the 74 members of the Council of Bishops, was drafted by Bishop William C. Martin of Dallas, Texas, who also read the message at the opening night session of the General Conference.

In another session, the nearly 800 delegates rejected overwhelmingly a proposal that the church cut off financial support from its seminaries that refused to admit Negro students. It settled instead for a pledge to "bring all Methodist-related institutions into full harmony with the policy of the church and its pronouncement on race". The Methodist Church supports 12 theological schools. One is all-Negro, and all except two of the others admit Negroes.

The delegates had earlier refused to endorse proposals which would have hastened the abolition of its all-Negro Central Jurisdiction and agreed to retain present machinery which provides for its gradual elimination. (See EPS N° 17)

EPS, Geneva

In Brief

The Rev. Simo Palosuo, secretary of the Board of the Centre of Christian Education of the Church of Finland, has been named director of the Laymen's Training Institute at Järvenpää. He succeeds the Rev. Dr. Arne Siirala who had held the post for several years. The centre, which is located 20 miles north of Helsinki, is the Church of Finland's main study institute for the laity.

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A message from the Bishops' Conference of the Church of Finland, urging traffic safety, will be issued to all applicants for a driver's licence in Finland.

* *

The Norwegian Missionary Council has asked the 21 churches and missionary organisations affiliated with it to "pray to God for freedom and decent living conditions for our brothers and sisters in South Africa".

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Eighteen of the 28 churches and chapels in Norway, destroyed during the war, have been rebuilt. Construction has also been started on three others. In all 47 new churches and chapels have been built since the end of the war.

* *

Donations to charities between the value of 50 (US\$ 7.26) and 1,000 crowns (US\$ 145.20) have for the first time been declared tax-free in Denmark. Religious institutions and organisations under the auspices of the national Lutheran Church and of the recognised Free Churches are included in the category which is entitled to receive donations tax-free.

* *

In many districts of Czechoslovakia children are no longer receiving any religious instruction, according to Mlada Fronte, a Prague newspaper. It said the decline of Christian education programmes was due to "the continuous advance of science, and technical progress".

* *

More than 3,000 persons, including many dignitaries from the church, government, politics, labour and other areas of Japanese life, gathered in Tokyo to attend the funeral of Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa, famed Christian social evangelist, who died on April 23, at the age of 71. (See EPS N° 16) In addition Dr.

Kagawa's family received thousands of condolence telegrams. Eulogies at the funeral were delivered by representatives of the National Christian Council of Japan, the United Church of Christ, and Protestant missions, as well as the Socialist Party and the Japanese Co-operative Federation.

* *

The Vatican has announced a plan to build and operate a powerful radio station in either Hong Kong or the Philippines. Its chief purpose, though not expressly stated in the announcement, will apparently be to beam Roman Catholic broadcasts to Communist China.

* *

Bishop Gerald Kennedy of Los Angeles, Cal., has been officially installed as president of the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church. He succeeds Bishop Marvin A. Franklin of Jackson, Miss. Named president-designate to succeed Bishop Kennedy at the end of his one-year term was Bishop Paul E. Martin of Little Rock, Ark.

* *

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines has sent its first Filipino missionary nurse to Turkey. She is Miss Hilaria P. Alaan, who will work for five years at the Ajarriah Smith Memorial Hospital near Ankara.

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"The Service of the Christian in Europe" will be the theme of a conference of European Reformed and Presbyterian Churches to be held August 24-29, 1961, at Montpellier, France. The theme was chosen by the Administrative Committee of the European Area of the World Alliance of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches during their meeting last week in Paris. The conference is expected to draw up to 150 representatives of the 28 European Alliance member churches.

* *

Generalissimo Rafael B. Trujillo of the Dominican Republic has announced that his government has sent to parliament the draft of a constitutional amendment which would lift the legal ban against Jehovah's Witnesses in the country. The proposed amendment would also give the Communists full protection under the law as a political party. Aim of the measure is to give all citizens "freedom to profess the political and religious ideologies they prefer, without limitations or restrictions".

* *

President Eisenhower will attend services in Moscow's only Baptist Church during his visit in June, according to an announcement of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians (Baptists). It said the President will visit the church on Sunday, June 12, which is dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

EPS, Geneva

Third Assembly Brochure

Additional copies of the new flyer on the World Council's Third Assembly enclosed with this issue may be ordered from: World Council of Churches, Assembly Preparation, 17 route de Malagnou, Geneva, Switzerland. The cost is 10 Swiss centimes (\$0.03US) (2d.) per copy for an order of 100 or more and 15 centimes (\$0.04US) (3d.) per copy for orders of less than 100. Postage is additional.

EPS, Geneva

Document

The following statement was adopted by the Christian Council of South Africa at its 13th biennial meeting at Capetown last week. The Council is a multi-racial body, composed of English-speaking churches and missions in South Africa and is a constituent member of the International Missionary Council. Its membership does not include the Dutch Reformed Churches.

The Christian Council of South Africa

The Christian Council of South Africa has met under the deep shadow of the crisis through which our country is passing; over 100 of our fellow citizens have lost their lives, 1700 are being detained in prison on no stated charge, large numbers are suffering serious privation and anxiety through the removal of parent and breadwinner. All this gives us grave concern for our country and for those on whom ill has fallen.

We reiterate the Council's earlier plea to the Government to end the present state of emergency as soon as possible; for the present situation breeds evil that grows with every hour.

We cannot too urgently press for the full re-establishment of the Rule of Law without which, together with an independent judiciary, no state can claim to be civilised and in keeping with Western standards. It is urgently important that all of those detained should either be released or charged before a public court.

We consider it is of vital importance that means of communication and consultation between Government and Urban African Leaders be established and maintained and urge that those responsible take the necessary steps immediately.

We maintain that for the dependants of detainees and political prisoners the State has a special responsibility which it should accept and carry out with humanity and generosity. While it would be wrong for the main burden of Social Welfare Services caused by the detentions to fall on voluntary welfare agencies or private charity; we appeal to Christian people to respond by money and personal service to the vast need that the Emergency has created.

We urge the Government to appoint immediately a Judicial Commission representative of our multi-racial society, to enquire fully and publicly into the underlying causes that give rise to such disturbances. We are aware that remedies for the ills of our country are not to be found only by investigations of commissions or the actions of Government; there is also need for deep searching of heart and mind by every South African of whatever race or religion, that we may see clearly what our duty to one another is and have courage to do it. Especially do we believe that the white people of South Africa holding as they do all political power have the greatest responsibility in this matter.

We call on all Christians to re-dedicate themselves to the carrying out of Christ's Law of Love toward all mankind, firstly because it is His Commandment and secondly because it is the only possible basis of a just society.

EPS, Geneva

